American Psychological Association (APA)

The American Psychological Association: Supporting High Quality Research

The American Psychological Association (APA) is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes 155,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. Through its divisions in 53 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 59 state, territorial, and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education, and human welfare.

Summary and Purpose: APA is committed to securing federal support for education research. By advocating for increased appropriations for research as well as sharing research findings, APA seeks to ensure that policymakers formulate education policy that is supported by research.

Accomplishments: Psychological scientists have contributed much to the science of learning as well as to the research base on effective instruction. While there has been a substantial body of knowledge developed around effective reading instruction, there is a significant lack of data on precisely how people learn math skills. Much of the past research on math learning and instruction has been conducted in a fragmented system, with little cumulative effect. Therefore, APA supports the collaborative efforts of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Science Foundation in advancing the research base in reading, math, and science learning. While the Interagency Education Research Initiative that involves each of these agencies has made some progress in the area of reading, much more needs to be done in the area of mathematics and science research. APA is encouraged that NICHD's new research program in math cognition and specific learning disabilities, IES's research program in effective math instruction, and NSF's Science of Learning Centers may bring some advances into the classroom in the near future. However, it may take significantly longer without sustained federal investment in these agencies.

With increased federal support for coordinated research on mathematics learning, psychological researchers will be able to further contribute to the research base in areas of mathematical proficiency, including basic calculation skills, mathematical conceptual understanding, comprehension, reasoning, procedural fluency, and strategic competence. APA would also like to see additional support for research on how children learn scientific concepts, such as hypotheses testing, and supports the inclusion of psychology in science curriculum for elementary and middle school children.

Plans for Next 12 Months: APA will continue its work on advocating for increased funding resources for education research.

Additionally, APA's Division on Educational Psychology publishes a quarterly journal for education research. More information about the division and its publications can be found at: http://www.apa.org/about/division/div15.html.

APA's Division on Developmental Psychology also publishes a journal on developmental psychology, which is applicable to education topics. More information about the division can be found at: http://www.apa.org/about/division/div7.html.